



ROOM DOCUMENT 9

**PHASE ONE EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PARIS DECLARATION
PROGRESS REPORT**

This note has been prepared by the co-chair of the Reference Group for the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration for information at the 7th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 20 – 21 February 2008.



**7th meeting
20 – 21 February 2008**

Phase one evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration progress report

Country and Donor/Agency HQ level evaluations

No countries or donor agencies have delivered on time. Delays vary from two weeks to three months. Of 20 studies, 14 reports and four summaries of preliminary findings have now been received in various stages of completion. Two country studies only started in February but are expected to be sufficiently advanced in time to provide input to the Synthesis. The quality of evaluations (both country and donor) varies considerably and an extra round of peer review is scheduled for several studies. This has had significant implications for the synthesis work (see below).

Thematic Studies

- Statistical Capacity Building – on track, completion in May
- Fragile States – on track, completion in June
- Linking the Paris Declaration with Aid and Development effectiveness – on track, completion in June
- Untying of Aid – behind schedule, TOR being negotiated,

None of the studies will inform the Synthesis, but results will be fed into relevant Round Tables in Accra.

Emerging Findings Workshop, 31 January – 1 February

Fifty two participants, comprising representatives of participating and non-participating countries and agencies, evaluation team leaders, peer reviewers, the synthesis team and a few resource persons attended the workshop. The overall assessment of the workshop was positive. It provided substantial input to the Synthesis and created a sense of ownership by the Reference Group. All documents and presentations related to the workshop can be found on the Evaluation Network's restricted website.

The Workshop discussed some **very preliminary findings** which are presented below

The following points are based on:

1. *Preliminary examination of draft versions of nine development partner evaluation reports and two country reports in hand by 15 January, 2008. None were final at the time;*
2. *The progress reports, presentations, breakout group and plenary discussions at the "Emerging Findings" Workshop held in Parys, South Africa from 30 January to 1 February, 2008.*

On the basis of these sources, it must be stressed that the following are indications of some interesting lines of evidence emerging from the preliminary, incomplete and donor-heavy group of reports in hand, adapted to reflect further inputs, commentaries and hypotheses from the Parys workshop. It should be expected that the revised donor reports, and especially the further country reports, to be received by 1 March, could fundamentally alter and add to some of the following initial points.

Some initial points around Ownership

"Ownership" is central to meeting the objectives of the Paris Declaration. At the level of principle, "ownership" has been widely accepted among donors and partner countries and there have also been positive movements among donors and within partner countries to enhance ownership. However, it is clear that there are differences in the definitions, understandings and expectations of ownership among donors and partner countries. Perceived tensions or disconnects between "government ownership" and "country ownership" suggest a need to strengthen a shared understanding of how these should be linked. Weak civil society and non-specialist "ownership" of the Paris Declaration itself has emerged as a key issue to be pursued further in the full synthesis.

Four key enabling conditions for greater ownership have been highlighted to date:

- Assertive leadership by partner countries
- Intensive engagement of the political authorities in partner countries
- Stronger de-centralisation of aid staff and authority to the field
- Wider and deeper political engagement at home, beyond the formal top-level commitment at the level of principle,

Some initial points around Alignment

There is formal commitment to alignment but progress is mixed. Partner country leadership, good policies and good governance are widely recognised as preconditions for aligning with country policies and priorities. However, there are indications of the persistence on donor priority issues, possibly a tailoring of strategies to donor preferences, and a need to pay further attention to the advocacy roles of donors. Improved but selective uses of country systems (e.g. finance, procurement) have been seen, but there has been no indications yet of major trends to reduction of the use of Project Implementation Units (PIUs). On the issue of aid predictability some progress has been made, but formal or political restrictions for making multi-year commitments remain. There has been very little coverage of the untying of aid in the studies to date. (A thematic study is to come on this).

Some initial points around Harmonisation

There is some evidence of forward steps in varied settings and none of backsliding. Common arrangements are spreading steadily but gradually, e.g. through Joint Assistance Strategies and Program Based Approaches. However, there are some political and policy obstacles to harmonisation, such as visibility, risk management in using others' systems and complex and "un-harmonised" aid architecture within some donor systems. Trust in others' systems appears key, and is held to depend heavily on experience of working together. There is little evidence emerging yet that joint missions and shared analysis are increasing as far as may have been expected. It is indicated that stronger country systems, and host country leadership are essential for making progress.

Some initial points around Managing for Development Results (MfDR)

This area was not extensively covered in the initial studies and there was an overall perception of only modest change. Workshop discussions and interest suggested that this may have under-reported the amount of activity, interest and effort underway. There are indications that donors will support clear results frameworks where countries have them. However, constraints such as unclear definitions, understanding and usability of MfDR, as well as multiple different frameworks on both sides, hamper progress in this area. Donor staff is committed to the Paris Declaration, but their performance is often measured in terms of their own corporate results frameworks, sometimes coming back to the delivery of inputs.

Some initial points around Mutual Accountability

This area has only received very little coverage and the overall perception is of only very modest change. This might have to do with the fact that there are few platforms for expressing demand for accountability, or that potential platforms are as yet underused. Some questions on this area are:

- Why is mutual accountability receiving so little attention and action?
- There are some examples of good practice models, why are these not being replicated elsewhere?
- Is the discrepancy on disbursement figures from donor and partner countries purely technical?

Some major initial issues emerging from the overall evaluation up to this point are:

- Contexts are vital, both the overall context within which the Declaration was conceived and is being applied, (in particular country contexts).
- Paris Declaration implementation is heavily influenced by political factors, not just technical/administrative ones.
- Commitment is uneven, both between and within systems.
- There are important effects of different levels of knowledge, engagement and commitment (HQ, field, politicians, NGOs)
- Capacities for implementation are strained.
- Modest benefits of change are emerging, but the transaction costs and transition pains to this point are greater than anticipated for all concerned.
- Commitment itself is identified as the most important incentive for Paris Declaration implementation up to now. How can this be reinforced and sustained?
- There is some evidence that implementing the five commitments are mutually-reinforcing as they should be, but also some concerns about confusion and tensions between them.

Taken in context, the overall evidence up to this point suggests modest forward movement at varied speeds on different commitments by different actors. There is no evidence yet of major backsliding or defection from the Paris Declaration commitments, in spite of strained capacities

TO RE-EMPHASISE: ALL THE EVIDENCE AND HYPOTHESES EMERGING TO DATE NEED SYSTEMATIC CHECKING AGAINST THE FINAL COUNTRY AND DONOR/AGENCY REPORTS TO COME AND APPLICATION OF THE FULL ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SYNTHESIS REPORT.

The following timeline for completion of the Synthesis was agreed to:

24 February	Synthesis Team to circulate an annotated report outline
1 st March	Management Group comments on annotated outline
1 March	Deadline for submittal of country/agency reports
25 March	1st draft report to Management Group and Reference Group for comments
31 March	Reference Group meeting in Paris to comment on 1 st draft
14 April	Synthesis Team submit 2 nd draft to Reference Group for written comments
21 April	Reference Group written comments to 2 nd draft
9 May	Synthesis Team submit 3 rd draft synthesis Report to Reference Group for comments
16 May	Deadline for Reference Group written comments on final draft synthesis
26 May	Final report to Management Group for final clearance
1 June	Final report cleared by MG for copy-editing and Translation
1 July	Deadline for print-ready material
2–4 Sept	Accra HLF

In addition to the QA provided by the Management and Reference groups an Advisory Panel will be established comprising 3 independent experts who are well known development thinkers, evaluators, academics or practitioners from different countries.